

## The Fall 835

### Chapter 835: Furnaces and Troublemakers

Iz looked at the spot where Mr. Bug once stood, her heart filled with unwillingness as space smoothed out following the burst of chaotic turbulence. This wasn't how it was supposed to go. How did he escape? Was she set up? Her eyes thinned as she turned to her surprised-looking uncle who had appeared next to her.

"Lord Valderak, I thought you locked space?" Iz asked with a calm voice.

"Ai, child, why do you use such distant language?" Valderak sighed. "I swear, this was not something I arranged."

"Then what happened?" Iz frowned. "How could he simply disappear?"

"That little madman hid some chaos in his body, and he infused it into some rudimentary escape bangle on his arm. I could lock down space, but I know too little about the Dao of Chaos. I feared that if I blocked his escape, he'd be rendered into a mist of blood as he was ripped out from whatever concepts dragged him away," Valderak explained.

"More importantly, he carried the mark of the Boundless Heavens. It mostly stabilized the spatial tunnel for him. Who knows what the result would be if I tried to meddle," the golem continued. "You know the situation of most of your grandpa's disciples. A shift in the heavens can be lethal while they are accomplishing their tasks."

"And you are not just saying this to placate me?" Iz said, not completely convinced her uncle hadn't simply looked the other way, happy to be done with this matter.

"When have I ever lied to you?" Valderak said with an innocent expression.

"All the time," Iz muttered.

"Well," Valderak coughed. "Not this time."

"Alright, where is he now?"

"One second," Valderak said as he closed his eyes.

However, he quickly opened them again and shook his head. "Chaos is truly a mysterious path. I can sense him, but in multiple directions. All are true, yet none of them are. We will have to wait for a bit to know for sure."

"So we missed him," Iz frowned. "By the way, what's a stalker?"

"It's... Someone good at tracking down people. Like how you managed to track him down across the multiverse in a few short years. He was most likely impressed, albeit begrudgingly?" the golem offered after some hesitation.

"So it was a backhanded compliment," Iz nodded. "Well, I'll still beat him up for good measure when I catch up."

"As you should," Valderak nodded before he stopped with a frown. "Wait, catch up? You're not thinking of-"

"I'm not going back. Definitely not," Iz said resolutely. "Not before I've accomplished my goal."

"Ai, all this for that troublesome brat?" Valderak sighed. "I cannot stay in these lower realms much longer. I have already tempted the Heavens by dealing with this fish. Someone might take notice if I linger and use it against your grandfather."

"A failure might affect my Dao Heart. If you're okay with me having such a failure hanging over my head while forming a core, then we can go home," Iz calmly said, eliciting a groan from the golem.

"When did you become such a naughty girl?" the golem muttered. "Is it because you've watched that brat?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," Iz smiled, but a scowl returned to her face when she looked at the still-burning Voidcatcher. "All because this troublemaker of a fish refused to spit out Mr. Bug. He said there was no such person in his world, that he had scanned to make sure. What a liar!"

"The guts of a lion," Valderak nodded. "I'll burn him a bit more."

The next moment, the heat of the surrounding rose once more, and the dimension itself started fraying as Valderak no longer had to worry about incinerating an E-grade cultivator.

"Please wait, young miss, esteemed master!" a new voice shouted as a humanoid cultivator appeared in front of the gargantuan Voidcatcher, surrounded by gigantic feathers crackling with lightning that were able to block out the flames.

White arcs of lightning continuously flashed around her, and her eyes shone with white radiance, matching the long feathers she had instead of hair. The next moment, an old man appeared next to her, his body covered in scorch marks. Obviously, the latter was the avatar of the Voidcatcher himself, the old man who had lied to them just a minute ago.

Iz looked with surprise, while her uncle only snorted and waved his hand, dragging the two cultivators to their side.

"Finally willing to show your face?" Valderak grunted before he looked at the young girl with some surprise. "A Thunder Roc? What's a little brat like you doing inside a Voidcatcher?"

"I humbly apologize if my Dao Guardian did something to upset lord and the young miss," the feathered woman said with a deep bow. "Our elders will make reparations if we have overstepped any bounds by mistake."

"Your elders?" Valderak asked before he slowly nodded in understanding.

Iz wasn't quite following, but she understood the gist of it when the Roc spoke up again.

"Lord Orom was assigned to accompany me by the Starbeast Alliance."

Valderak didn't react at all to the mention of that powerful organization, but Iz's brows slightly furrowed. She wasn't too versed in politics, with her uncle always telling her it was unimportant. He

always said to do what you wanted and if someone disagreed, just test their fate. But even she knew the situation had become a bit thorny.

Grilling the fish would bring some trouble to her grandma, and she had enough on her plate with the System trying to hunt her down.

Besides, the Starbeast Alliance was pretty powerful even if they only had a couple of thousand official members. After all, the minimum requirement to join was to be a Primordial Beast. Not only that, they only took in the big guys whose bodies were so massive they couldn't stay on planets any longer, perennially drifting among the stars. This so-called Lord Orom was probably one of their smallest members.

This Roc was just a child, but by the time she reached adulthood in a few millennia, her wingspan would be enough to cover a planet upon taking her beast form. Iz looked at the young girl curiously and found she was fearfully looking back at her before averting her gaze. As far as Iz could remember, this was the first roc she had ever met, though there were some other beast cultivators at her last gathering.

Seeing the two here was also a bit confusing. Iz wasn't an expert on Starbeasts, but they really shouldn't be this close to the frontier. They needed so much energy just to sustain their oversized bodies, making these desolate regions almost lethal. It might be somewhat able to sustain itself by swallowing enough treasures and cultivators, but it would still be better off if it just stayed in one of the regions controlled by the alliance.

"You must be a promising one to reach atavism at early D-grade, though I still wonder why they assigned a Primordial Beast to guard you," Valderak slowly said before his eyes thinned. "More importantly, the Starbeast Alliance have really become overbearing as of late, with your guardian swallowing humanoids left and right. Its fell karma is almost blinding me."

"Only second-tier warriors and below," the young woman hurriedly said. "The alliance remembers the agreement, and we make sure to stay within the limits. Sometimes a mistake might occur, but we always offer reparations when that happens."

"So what are you doing in this region? You should know the rules of non-interference," Valderak said.

"It's my fault," the young Roc said. "I said I wanted to visit the wild regions, dragging Lord Orom with me."

"Uncle, let's go," Iz said, no longer interested in staying since she couldn't grill the fish and Mr. Bug was already gone.

"One second," the golem smiled before he turned to the old man. "Give us the [Stone of Celestial Void]."

Iz looked at her uncle with confusion, and the two beasts were startled as well. Even then, space flickered and a small stone appeared in the hand of the old man.

"Is this the thing lord is talking about?" Orom said hesitantly. "It should only be a D-grade material, if lord wants, I have many--"

"This is what I want," Valderak interrupted as the stone flew into his hand. "Child, let's go."

Iz nodded, and the next moment the two disappeared in a puff of flames leaving the two beasts to their own devices.

"Ai," the old man sighed as he turned around, looking at the state of his body.

"Mister, how bad is it?" Til'Siri asked.

"I am ashamed. I could not resist that master at all," Orom said, some fear still lingering in his eyes. "But I should be fine in ten thousand years or so."

"Audacious," the roc said with a frown. "Such an attack, for what? An E-grade cultivator?"

"That golem... It should be the sixth disciple of Mohzius Tayn," the old man hesitated.

"The Tayns?" Til'Siri exclaimed with fright. "We're lucky to be alive, then."

"I'm sorry for implicating the young miss," the old man sighed. "It's all because of my oversight swallowing that troublesome brat."

"You were just following orders, mister," Til'Siri said with a shake of her head. "The providence on that batch was unprecedented, and I think he must have been a big part of it. Did we get what we needed before he escaped?"

"That's..." Orom said hesitantly as he frowned at his body.

"What's wrong?" the roc asked.

"The monks have banded together to spread their gospel, and the undead are digging toward the corpses. If I allow it to continue, the result will not be as good. The array still needs to charge for another few years," the old man said. "I am afraid that I cannot completely restrain them in my current state."

"A throne, the Sangha, and the Undead Empire. All at the same time. It cannot be a coincidence," Til'Siri muttered, her brows furrowed in thought before her eyes lit up and she turned to the Voidcatcher. "Do you think..?"

The old man clearly understood what she was referring to, and a smile spread across his face. "It is fractured, but it really looks like it might be in this region."

"Tens of Millions of years of searching, it's finally coming to an end. The Alliance will reward you richly for your contribution," Til'Siri said, her eyes veritably radiating. "Just let those people on the inside take what they want. Just put up enough of a struggle to make it believable. We're going back."

"Your father doesn't want us to confirm?" Orom asked.

"Normally, yes," Til'Siri hesitated. "But now... I have a bad feeling after meeting those two."

"Too many coincidences at the same time," the old man agreed.

"Hopefully, the Tayns just came for that boy," Til'Siri muttered. "And perhaps those inside are only after the bodies. But we shouldn't push it. Let's return immediately. The Starbeast Alliance has a headstart thanks to the prophecy, but the other factions will find out sooner or later. We need to maintain the lead as long as possible if we want the best chance of seizing that thing."

“Ultom Courts, Left Imperial Palace,” Orom whispered with longing in his eyes before the two disappeared.

Orom opened up a rift in space, eager to leave this wretched area behind. He’d deal with those buggers inside his body as soon as he managed to hide in a spatial fold. However, just as he was about to pass through, Orom found himself slowed to a crawl. His movements, his Dao, his thoughts. They were all decelerated, as though he was trying to swim against the current of the river of time itself.

“It took us some time tracking you down,” a snort echoed through the void as a woman appeared out of nowhere. “Looks like you’ve run into some trouble.”

She was as small as a speck of dust, but Orom shuddered as he saw space freeze for thousands of miles in every direction. Even those terrifying flames that had threatened to consume him just moments ago were stopped in place as temporal ripples spread in every direction, dragging a moment in time toward eternity.

Had someone been attracted by the commotion just now, making their move now that he was weakened? He refused to give in, knowing he was right at the finish line. He had signed up for an eternal task with the Starbeast Alliance, all for the chance to remove the imperfection in his bloodline. Finally, he had accomplished it – he had found the clues to the Left Imperial Palace.

He pushed his harried body to the limits, but every dimension he connected to was an eternity away, locked away by millions of years of death. If he dared pass through those barriers, he knew his remaining lifespan would be used up before even getting close.

‘See what they want!’ he heard Til’Siri say from the safety of her courtyard, and he inwardly swore at this brat.

He hated showing obeisance to this little bird, just because her mother was a bigshot. Worse yet, he was afraid she’d try to take credit, even if she had only been here a few years. She hadn’t done a thing so far, and she had only spent her time using up his resources and studying the [Emptiness Array] to understand his method of searching. It was he who had spent most of his life scouring the edges of the Multiverse for any clues.

Still, he could only follow the little roc’s orders. At least this new arrival didn’t directly attack upon arriving. So Orom conjured an avatar again, appearing some distance away from the humanoid woman reeking of antiquity and death. He shuddered when he saw the two abyssal orbs for eyes, and he was filled with some trepidation upon remembering he had consumed some half-bloods recently.

But a second tremor shook him to the core upon remembering the description he’d heard just a moment ago – the brat who had managed to escape. ‘An E-grade human with an axe. He sometimes looks like a Draugr.’

It couldn’t possibly be... Right?

“I have come to collect one of your furnaces,” the woman said without preamble. “He is a pureblood Draugr wielding an axe and chains, but he might sometimes look like a human.”

Oh no.

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“Why did you want that thing?” Iz asked curiously as she looked at the small stone in her uncle’s palm.

They had found a nearby sun to reside on while waiting for Mr. Bug to pop out, the scorching heat helping her uncle alleviate some of the pressure.

“Girl, don’t you remember?” Valderak smiled as he threw the small ball over to Iz. “Your little friend wanted to buy this thing, but he was coming up short.”

“He’s not my friend,” Iz muttered, but she still grabbed the treasure as it flew over.

“Then, don’t you want to become friends?” the golem asked. “Isn’t that what you’re missing? Friends to go on adventures with, to deal with the boredom brought by eons of cultivation.”

Iz thoughtfully looked at the stone in her hand, sensing the odd energies within. She didn’t know why, but it reminded her a bit of that guy. Was it bloodline-related? She played with it a bit as she considered what her uncle said. Was this why she had come all this way? Perhaps?

She had always stayed on her private planet since young, where only the most trusted attendants could reside. People who had served for generations without ever coming in contact with outside factions to minimize the risk of betrayal. The only exception was her uncle, and the other disciples she had yet to meet.

While the attendants on the planet were friendly, Iz knew enough to tell they weren’t friends. There was an unbreachable distance between them, one ingrained into their very cores. Besides, they lacked talent, meaning they weren’t fated. Even if she managed to get closer to one, they would eventually drift apart.

Her uncle had said that one’s perspective of time and people would change as you rose through the ranks. Those who couldn’t keep up weren’t fated, bound to an ignoble existence. As for those young masters she had met on her few outings, they weren’t friends either. A few might have the potential to keep up with her cultivation pace, but they were just sent there by their elders in an attempt to build relations with her grandpa.

Was this why she was so interested in Mr. Bug? A weird aberrance at the edge of the universe containing a bloodline that put pressure on her own. Someone who didn’t even know about the situation in the upper realms or who she or her grandparents were, yet had the potential to reach the true realms of cultivation and ascend beyond being an unfated transient existence.

“Are you good at making friends?” Iz said with surprise. “I have never seen you with any.”

“Bah, that’s just because I’ve been guarding you for the past few decades,” Valderak snorted. “I have a lot of friends.”

“Are you referring to the other uncles and aunts?” Iz asked suspiciously, wondering if being disciple-brothers and sisters were really the same thing as friends.

“Anyway. You catch more flies with honey,” Valderak said after a few seconds of drawn-out silence. “You should beat him up to prove you are stronger than him. That brings respect, and it will encourage

him to keep getting stronger. Then you can give this thing as a present. That will show that you are generous and kind of heart.”

“Uncle actually knows about these matters as well,” Iz nodded.

“I’ve been around for six million years, what don’t I know?” Valderak boisterously laughed. “Just listen to your uncle and you can’t go wrong. You can also take out the stone if he is about to escape again. The brat seems pretty greedy, and seeing this thing should stop him in his tracks long enough for you to catch him.”

“Alright, I’ll listen to uncle,” Iz smiled. “Can you sense anything yet?”

“Not yet,” Valderak said with a shake of his head. “It might be a while depending on how far he teleported.”

Iz nodded, and simply closed her eyes in cultivation.

“Oh, there we go,” Valderak eventually said after two weeks had passed. “He’s out.”

“Let’s go!” Iz said with glee.

“There’s a problem,” the golem frowned. “He’s in a sector at the utmost border, and the Heavens have restricted it for some reason. My perception got extinguished in an instant.”

“Then what do we do?” Iz frowned.

“Let me talk with your grandfather,” Valderak said after some hesitation and closed his eyes.

Two minutes later they opened again as a second golem appeared next to them, this one a Peak Monarch.

“Ancestor,” the golem said with a bow.

“Accompany my ward to a frontier sector to gain experience,” Valderak said. “She comes to harm, and fate for you and your line ends. Accomplish the mission, and I will personally assist you in confirming your Dao.”

“I understand,” the golem said with a bow. “I will accomplish the task without fail.”

“Grandpa is letting me go?” Iz said, actually a bit surprised. After hearing that her uncle couldn’t go, she would have thought her grandfather wanted her to return.

“Go, have fun,” Valderak smiled. “Make friends, fight some people, go on adventures. I’ll teleport you as close as I can, but it will take you a while longer to reach the sector.”

“Uncle is the best,” Iz said, her smile widening even further. A few moments later the two were gone, leaving Valderak behind.

“I guess I should check out what has all these factions in a tizzy,” Valderak muttered, and the next moment he was gone as well.